

Remarks in West Palm Beach, Florida

October 16, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here. It lifts our spirits that so many came out to say hello on a Saturday afternoon. Laura and I are grateful that you're here, and we appreciate you being here.

We're here to ask for your vote and your help. As Jeb mentioned, we're coming close to voting time, and it's time to go to your friends and neighbors and remind them they have a duty in this country to vote. And when you get them headed to the polls, tell them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in office today, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, I'll marry you, just as long as I never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. She's given a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a warm, compassionate, great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate. I admit, Dick Cheney doesn't have the waviest hair in the race——

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. Dick Cheney is a great Vice President.

I'm proud of brother Jeb. You know, you can determine the character of a person when times are tough, and times are really tough for you all here in Florida—not one hurricane but four. Jeb stepped up, as did a lot of other people, including, I hope, the Federal Government to your satisfaction, to provide help for people who hurt. But you know what we saw in those storms was the great character of the people of Florida, neighbor loving neighbor, neighbor helping neighbor. There's no doubt in my mind that the people of this State showed the people of the world that there's great character amongst you. And I'm proud of you, and I

want to thank you for doing everything you can to help rebuild this State.

What an honor it is to be sharing the stage with Jack Nicklaus. He gave me a chance—I asked for a few putting lessons. [Laughter] He said, "Your game is beyond repair." [Laughter] But I'm proud to have his support, proud for him—to be able to call him friend.

I also want to thank Congressman Mark Foley, who is with us today. I appreciate you being here, Congressman. Congressman Clay Shaw and Emilie Shaw are with us today. Thanks for coming. Tom Gallagher is with us today. I appreciate him being here. I want to thank all the other statehouse officials and local officials.

But most of all, I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank all the volunteers who are getting ready to walk the vote across not only Florida but all across our country today. See, what's happening is, we've got people all over the country heading out into neighborhoods to knock on doors and putting in a good word for the Bush-Cheney ticket. Some volunteers are watching on the Internet right now, and I hope they're stretching for their walk. [Laughter] I want to thank them for their hard work. With your help, with their help, we're going to win a great victory in Florida and win on November the 2d.

In the last few years, the American people have gotten to know me. They know my blunt way of speaking. I got that from Mother. [Laughter] They know I sometimes mangle the English language. I got that from Dad. [Laughter] Americans also know I tell you exactly what I'm going to do, and I keep my word.

You know, I enjoyed the debates against my opponent, and they showed stark differences between his views and mine. We have different records. We have very different plans for the future. My record is one of reforming education, of lowering taxes, of providing prescription drug coverage for our seniors, improving homeland protection, and waging an unrelenting fight against the ideologues of hate.

My opponent's record is 20 years of out-of-the-mainstream votes without many significant reforms and results to show for it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. These records are important. They are important because our country faces challenges. And the next President must recognize the need to lead and reform. On issue after issue, from jobs to health care to the need to strengthen Social Security, Senator Kerry's policies fail to recognize the changing realities of today's world and the need for fundamental reforms.

See, when I came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months. The American economy was sliding into a recession. To help families and to get this economy growing again, I pledged to reduce your taxes. I kept my word. The results are clear. The recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

Over the last 3 years, our economy has grown at the fastest rate as any in nearly 20 years. The homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. Farm and ranch income is up. In the past 13 months, we have added 1.9 million new jobs. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Your unemployment rate is 4.5 percent. This economy is moving forward, and we're not going to go back to the days of tax and spend.

To make sure quality jobs are created right here in America, we've got to make sure America is the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations on our job creators. That means we've got to do something about these lawsuits that threaten small businesses that are creating most new jobs.

To create jobs in America, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. It's a plan that encourages conservation. It encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It encourages clean coal technology. It encourages the exploration for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. To make sure this economy stays strong and people can find work, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To create jobs, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up markets around the world for U.S. products. We open up our markets for goods from overseas, and that's good for you. If you've got more choices in the marketplace, you're likely to get that

which you want at a better price and higher quality. So, rather than shutting our markets, I'm saying to countries like China, "Treat us the way we treat you." Americans compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

To create jobs, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. My opponent has his own history on the economy. In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he's built up a record of a Senator from Massachusetts. *[Laughter]* He's voted to raise taxes 98 times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Think about that. He's been in the United States Senate for 20 years. That's about five times a year. *[Laughter]* That's a pattern. *[Laughter]* That's an indication of what's going to come. See, he can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

He's now promising not to raise taxes on anybody who earns less than \$200,000 a year. The problem is, to keep that promise he would have to break almost all of his other ones. *[Laughter]* He's promised \$2.2 trillion in new spending. That's with a "T." And yet his plan to pay for it is to tax the rich. But you can't raise enough money to tax the rich to pay for 2.2 trillion. There's a tax gap between his promises and what he can raise. And guess who usually has to fill the tax gap.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes. Let me say something else about the rhetoric of taxing the rich. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason: to slide the tab and stick you with the bill. We're not going to let the Senator tax you; we're going to carry Florida again and win in November.

When I came into office, our public schools had been waiting for decades for hopeful reform. Too many of our children were shuffled through school, year after year, without learning the basics. I pledged to restore accountability to our schools and raise standards and end the soft bigotry of low expectations, and I kept my word.

To build a more hopeful America, we must have the best prepared and most highly skilled workforce in the world. Most new jobs are filled with people—by people with at least 2 years of college, yet one in four of our students gets there. So that's why we'll

fund early intervention programs in our high schools to help at-risk students. We'll place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous examination before graduation. By raising performance in our high schools and expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

When I came into office, we had a problem in Medicare. Medicine was changing; Medicare was not. For example, Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for a heart surgery but would not pay a dime for the prescription drugs that can prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That was not fair to our seniors, and it was not fair to the taxpayers. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors, and I kept my word. Seniors are getting discounts on medicine. Docs are being treated fairly. Rural hospitals are being reimbursed. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

We have more work to do. We have more work to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. We need a safety net for those with the greatest needs. I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get primary and preventative care, places where people can get the help they need without burdening the emergency rooms of our hospitals. In a new term, we'll work to make sure every poor county in America has a community health center. We'll need to do more to make sure poor children are fully subscribed in our program for low-income families.

We've got to do more to make sure health care is affordable. Most of the uninsured work for small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. To help our workers get the health care they need, we must allow small businesses to join together so they can purchase insurance at the same discounts big companies are able to do. We will expand health savings accounts so workers in small businesses are able to pay low premiums and can save tax-free for

a health care account they manage and call their own.

To make sure health care is available and affordable, we must do something about the junk lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice and running the premiums up. By forcing doctors to practice defensive medicine, medical lawsuits cost the Government about \$28 billion a year. That means they cost you \$28 billion a year. The lawsuits cost our Nation's economy anywhere from 60 billion to 100 billion dollars a year. They drive up insurance premiums, which drives good doctors out of practice. You cannot be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors. I'm standing with the patients. I'm for medical liability reform—now.

My opponent says he has a health care plan.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. My opponent has a health care plan. It's a plan for bigger and more intrusive Government. The other day in the debate, he said, "The Government has nothing to do with it." He was talking about his health care plan. I could barely contain myself. [Laughter] Of course, the Government has things to do with it. The facts are, 8 out of 10 people who get health care under Senator Kerry's plan would be placed on a Government program.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Eight million Americans would lose their private health insurance, and most would go on Medicaid. That is a Government program. Senator Kerry claimed his plan would help small businesses. Those who've studied his plan call it an overpriced albatross which would saddle small businesses with 225 new mandates.

I have a different view of health care. I'm not for increasing the Federal role in health care. I want to make sure health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

I've set out policies that move America toward a positive and optimistic vision. We're headed toward an ownership society in America. There's a saying that no one ever washes a rental car. [Laughter] There's a lot of wisdom in that statement. [Laughter] When you own something, you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country.

That's why we're encouraging entrepreneurship. Every time a small business is started, someone is achieving the American Dream. We're encouraging health savings accounts so people have the security of owning and managing their own health care account. We're promoting homeownership. I love it when more and more people from all walks of life open up the door where they live and say, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

In a new term, we'll take the next step to build an ownership society by strengthening Social Security. Our Social Security system needs fixing. First, let me talk to those who are on Social Security today. You might remember the 2000 campaign when they said in these TV ads, "If George W. wins, you will not get your check." I won, and you got your checks. You will continue to get your checks. The problem in Social Security is not for those on Social Security today or baby boomers like me.

The problem is for our children and our grandchildren. People are understandably worried about whether our children and grandchildren will have Social Security around when they need it. For their sake, we must be bold and think about how to reform Social Security. For our children's sake, we must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their payroll taxes in a personal savings account that they call their own and that the Government cannot take away.

My opponent wants to maintain the status quo when it comes to Social Security. He's against the Social Security reforms I just discussed, and he's just—against about every other reform that gives more authority and control to individuals. On issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools with less accountability to higher taxes, he takes the side of more Government control.

There is a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He dismisses that as a label, but he must have been thinking differently when he told a newspaper, "I am a liberal and proud of it." As a matter of fact, the nonpartisan National Journal magazine did a study and named him the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. That takes hard work. [Laughter]

I have a different record and a different philosophy. I do not believe in big Government, and I do not believe Government should be indifferent. That is called compassionate conservatism. I believe in policies that empower people to improve their lives, not try to run their lives. So we're helping men and women find the skills and tools they need to prosper in a time of change. We're helping all Americans to have a future of dignity and independence, and that is how I will continue to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

In a time of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but the record is real clear. [Laughter] He says he supports the institution of marriage, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, which my predecessor signed into law. He voted against the ban on the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He described the Reagan years as a time of moral darkness.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. He can run, but he cannot hide.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. The most solemn duty of the

American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We're transforming our military. The All-Volunteer Army will remain an all-volunteer army. We're strengthening our intelligence. We're staying on the offensive. We will strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We will spread freedom and liberty. And we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world as it was some 3½ years ago. Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups. Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a dangerous place and a gathering threat. And Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we acted, because the United States led, Afghanistan is free and an ally in the war on terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. Because we acted to defend ourselves, more than 50 million people are now free, and that makes us more secure.

Think about what happened in Afghanistan. I want the youngsters here to understand the significance of what took place in 3½ short years. It wasn't all that long ago that the people of that country lived under the barbaric regime of the ideologues of hate. They lived in a period of darkness. Young girls were not allowed to go to school. Their mothers were pulled in the public square and whipped if they didn't toe their ideological line of these people. Because we acted to secure ourselves and to remove Al Qaida's ability to train, the people of Afghanistan are

free. They went to the polls. They went to the polls to vote for President in the millions. The first voter in Afghanistan was a 19-year-old woman. Freedom is on the march. The people of Afghanistan no longer live in darkness. They now live in light because of democracy.

And we're making progress in Iraq. The people of Iraq will have elections in January. Think how far that society has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves and brutality. No, we will stand with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, because when America gives its word, America will keep its word. And we will stand with those people because we understand free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentment and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight the terrorists instead of harboring them. Freedom will help us keep the peace we all want.

So our mission is clear. We'll help the countries train armies so that the people of Afghanistan and Iraq can do the hard work of defending their democracies. We'll help them get on the path of stability and self-government as quickly as possible, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

It is a great honor to be the Commander in Chief of a great military. And we're a great military because of the character of the people who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank the veterans who are here today for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform. I want to thank the military families who are here today for their sacrifices.

We will make sure that our troops have all the resources they need to complete their missions. That's why I went to the United States Congress and asked for \$87 billion of supplemental funding in September of '03. It was a very important request. We were there to support our troops in harm's way, and I received great bipartisan support for my request. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against funding for our troops in combat, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When you're out rounding up the vote, remind people of this startling statistic: Only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding for our troops—only four—two of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him why—you might remember the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign, when he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's had several explanations since then of his vote. One of them was, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in harm's way.

Tomorrow is the one-year anniversary of Senator Kerry's vote against funding for our troops. My opponent's many and conflicting positions on this issue are a case study into why his contradictions call into question his credibility and his ability to lead our Nation. In September 2003, as the \$87 billion funding package was being debated, Senator Kerry said on national TV, "It would be irresponsible to abandon our troops by voting against it." Just one month later, he did exactly that irresponsible thing, and he abandoned our troops in combat by voting against the funding. What happened to change the Senator's mind so abruptly in one short month? His opponent in the Democrat primary, Howard Dean, was gaining ground as an antiwar candidate. Senator Kerry apparently decided supporting our troops, even while they were in harm's way, was not as important as shoring up his political position.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. At a time of great threat to our country, at a time of great challenge to the world, the Commander in Chief must stand on principle, not on the shifting sands of political convenience.

There are big differences of opinion about how best to lead in this world. Senator Kerry proposed that we should pass a "global test" before we defend ourselves.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The problem is with that "global test," the Senator can never pass it.

Remember what happened in 1990. The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting action to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. The international community was united. Countries throughout the world joined our coalition. Yet, even after United Nations approval, in the United States Senate, Senator Kerry voted against the authorization for the use of force. If that coalition didn't pass his "global test," nothing will pass a "global test."

During the debate, you might remember he said that removing Saddam Hussein was a "mistake." He actually said he would have done it differently by supporting another United Nations Security Council resolution.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Precisely what Saddam Hussein wanted. He wanted the world to look the other way. If my opponent had his way, Saddam Hussein would not only be sitting in a palace in Baghdad, he'd be in Kuwait. The world is better off with Saddam in a prison cell.

Listen, I'll continue to work to build strong alliances to keep our coalition strong. I talked to Prime Minister Tony Blair yesterday on Air Force One as I was heading from Iowa to Wisconsin. Alliances are important. Friendships are important in this dangerous world. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I'll tell you what I mean by that. One of Laura and my best friends or closest friends in the international scene is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. That doesn't sound like much until you think about the fact that we were at war with them 60 years ago. Japan was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. My dad fought against the—our dad fought against the Japanese. I'm sure your dads and granddads probably did as well. They were a mortal enemy.

Yet, after we won in World War II, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, believed in the transformational power of liberty. He believed that liberty could change an enemy into an ally. There was a lot of skeptics about that in America then, and you can understand why. Why would you want to work with the enemy? People lost lives,

had their families turned upside down, were wondering why we even cared about a former enemy. But fortunately, enough citizens and the President believed in the power of liberty. And today, I sit down with Prime Minister Koizumi, as a result of Japan being a democracy, talking about the peace we all want.

Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq. They'll be talking about the peace in the Middle East, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their freedom. I believe that women in the Middle East want to live in a free society. I believe moms in the Middle East want to raise their child in a free world. I believe all these things, because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Extending freedom means confronting the evil of anti-Semitism. Today, I signed the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act of 2004. This law commits the Government to keep a record of anti-Semitic acts throughout the world and also a record of responses to those acts. This Nation will keep watch and make sure the ancient impulse of anti-Semitism never finds a home in the modern world.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and the deep faith in the values that makes this a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that era when one—that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console people, and a guy grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, when I traveled your great State, I made a pledge that if you gave me

a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. On to victory. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the Sound Advice Amphitheater. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; professional golfer Jack Nicklaus; Emilie Shaw, wife of Representative Clay Shaw; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Daytona Beach, Florida

October 16, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here on a beautiful Florida Saturday afternoon. Laura and I are honored so many came out to say hello. We're here to ask for your vote and ask for your help. As Jeb said, it's nearly voting time, and we're counting on you to get your friends and neighbors to the polls. Everybody ought to vote in this country. In a democracy, we have a duty to vote. So round up everybody you can find, head them to the polls, and remind them, if they want a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

And perhaps the reason why you should put me back in is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years. I love her dearly, and she's a great First Lady.

I'm proud of my Vice President. I recognize he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. *[Laughter]* I didn't pick him for his hair. I picked him because of his experience and sound judgment.

I'm proud of my brother Jeb. You've been through a lot of hardship in this State—not one hurricane, not two, but four. The people of this State rose to the occasion, as did your Governor. It's amazing what happens in hard times. The compassion of this country comes forth, and the compassion of the people of